10. On repairs and the construction of new buildings, the outlay of the year was Rs. 457.

11. The number of new cases taken into Court during the year was 60 against 85 of the year before. Of the 52 cases disposed of in 1896-97, conviction was obtained in 34, and the percentage of failure for the two years was 40 and 35, respectively, while the cases compounded under S. 67 of the Indian Forest Act rose from 2,029 to 2,162.

12. The area closed against the grazing of browsers and other animals is in excess of what it was in 1895-96 for the sole reason that there is an urgent need for bringing a vast area under reproduction.

13. The impoundings have been heavier, the figures of 1896-97 showing an excess of 8,620 head of animals over those of 1895-96. The increase is mainly among browsers.

14. The value of free labour availed of for the purposes of constructing and repairing boundary marks and paths as well as erecting hedges round the compartments under reproduction in the different Divisions of the Circle is estimated at Rs. 10,266 in the aggregate.

15. The season was one of normal inundation, in consequence of which the natural reproduction was of an average character, and the efforts made to reproduce certain areas artificially also met with a fair amount of success. In the Kot Sultan plantation, cultural operations were undertaken in a further area of 687 acres. The young crop of seedlings, natural as well as artificial, was more or less injured by frost in some of the forests of Upper and Central Sind.

16. The average price per acre realised by the sale of the standing crop in the coupes marked out for exploitation during 1896-97 was Rs. 8-0-4 against Rs. 6-0-8 of the year previous.

17. From grazing fees, the receipts of the year amounted to Rs. 58,470, *i.e.*, there was an increase of Rs. 1,390 over those of the one preceding.

18. The gross as well as the surplus revenue of the Forest year exhibit a falling off of Rs. 1,53,448 and Rs. 52,850, respectively, owing to unprecedented circumstances. In the first place, the cost of the departmental fellings formed an item of credit on the revenue side for a portion of the year 1895-96, and in the second place the instalments, amounting to Rs. 61,000, due from coupe contractors and payable before the end of June 1897 could not be recovered in time, and the revenue realised by the sale of bahan timber fell short of the expectations owing to the outbreak of plague.

CHAPTER I.

Extension and Constitution of State Forests.

I.—Alteration of Area.

Changes during the year.

19. The modifications in area that have taken place during the past year are given in detail in Forms Nos. 46 and 46A. The following abstract statement shows the net results of these changes :—

Class of Forests.	At the commencement of the year.		Changes during the year.				At close of the year.	
			Added.		Excluded.			
	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.
Reserved ...	1,060	106	3	535	...	...	1,064	1
Protected ...	4	372	...	...	3	427	...	585
Unclassed ...	...	...	3	427	...	...	3	427
Total ...	1,064	478	7	322	3	427	1,068	373

Explanation of the differences.

20. The difference in the area coming under each of the three heads adopted is explained below :—

(*a*) *Reserved Forests.*

(i) The afforestations by notifications under the Indian Forest Act amounted to 2,071, 136 and 14 acres, respectively, in the Shikarpur, Hyderabad and Karachi Collectorates.

(ii) An area of 88 acres, which was constituted a Reserved Forest under the authority of Government Resolution No. 7031, dated 22nd August 1894, in the Tatta Taluka of the Karachi District having not been taken into account since it was notified, has been included in this year's returns.

(iii) The addition of the remaining 146 acres is due to the correction of a mistake made in the past in striking off from the register lands simply alienated for the requirements of the Irrigation Department in the Mehar and Labdarya Talukas of the Shikarpur District, but not formally disforested under S. 26 of the Indian Forest Act.

(*b*) *Protected and Unclassed Forests.*

The rectification of an error in including $3\frac{427}{640}$ square miles under Protected Forest, through a misinterpretation of the orders contained in Government Resolution No. 6453, dated 13th September 1886, accounts for the difference shown under these two heads. This area Government, when according their sanction to its temporary retention by the Forest Department, had no intention of recognising as a legally constituted Protected Forest.

The actual increase in the total area of State Forests was 2,221 acres, the remainder of the total difference of 234 acres resulting merely from errors corrected and omissions supplied.

Reconciliation of figures of forest areas.

21. The reconciliation of the discrepancies discovered between the areas shown in statistical returns of the Agricultural Department and those given in Forest Form No. 46 is found to be surrounded with no ordinary difficulties. But every effort is being made to remove them, or, at any rate, to reduce their number to a minimum. It has been reported that, while the figures were being scrutinised in a divisional office, it was necessary to send for the Survey Registers with a view to trace the origin of the discrepancies. It so transpired that, while some of the mistakes were due to purely clerical errors, others had been caused by the peculiar method in which the Survey records are maintained, in that the legally constituted forest area in some cases has been omitted, while that which has not been formally disforested under the Indian Forest Act has been excluded from their Registers. The Superintendent of Land Records and Agriculture has, therefore, been asked to adopt certain suggestions and revise his Registers in order to render the detection and subsequent elimination of errors comparatively easy.

Details of the distribution of the legally constituted forest areas.

22. The distribution amongst Forest Divisions of the legally constituted areas, at the commencement and the close of the year under report, is given in the following statement :—

Division.	Area on 1st July 1896.						Added during the year.					
	Reserved.		Protected.		Unclassed.		Reserved.		Protected.		Unclassed.	
	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.
Sukkur	449	358	...	585	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Naushahro	241	207	3	427	...	...	(a) 3	433	...	...	3	427
Hyderabad	197	121	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Jerruck	172	60	...	...	...	...	(c) 11	286	...	...	...	...
Total ...	1,060	106	4	372	...	...	15	79	...	...	3	427

Division.	Excluded during the year.						Area on 30th June 1897.					
	Reserved.		Protected.		Unclassed.		Reserved.		Protected.		Unclassed.	
	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.	Square miles.	Acres.
Sukkur	...	...	...	...	...	...	449	358	...	585	...	...
Naushahro	...	...	3	427	...	...	245	...	...	...	3	427
Hyderabad	(b) 11	184	...	...	...	...	185	577	...	...	...	...
Jerruck	...	...	...	...	...	...	183	346	...	...	...	...
Total ...	11	184	3	427	...	...	1,064	1	...	585	3	427

(a) By settlement, 3 square miles 287 acres. By correction of errors, 146 acres.

(b) By redistribution.

(c) By settlement, 14 acres. By correction of errors, 88 acres. By redistribution, 11 square miles 184 acres.

N. B.—To ensure greater facility of inspection and to equalise the area between the two divisions, $11\frac{144}{640}$ square miles were transferred from the Hyderabad to the Jerruck Division.

Action of the river.

23. The following statement shows approximately the action of the river on the forest frontage during the period under report :—

Division.	Area lost.	Area gained.	Amount spent.	Net value of material sold.	Net value of material remaining in hand.
	Acres.	Acres.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Sukkur ...	1,607	6,956	126 0 0	648 0 0	585 0 0
Naushahro ...	905	9,046	...	3,419 12 0	...
Hyderabad ...	677	800	...	451 12 0	...
Jerruck ...	325	1,120	...	276 0 0	...
Total ...	3,514	17,922	126 0 0	4,795 8 0	585 0 0

24 The set of the river was in favour of the forests throughout the year, especially in the Naushahro and Sukkur Divisions, resulting in more than double the area being thrown up in front of the forests than in 1895-96. This addition may or may not be washed away, and, even should it remain as permanent accretions, may not be handed over to the Department.

The area gained during the year was 14,408 acres in excess of the area lost by erosion. Out of the latter, 2,199 acres were valuable and fit for the axe, whereas the remaining 1,315 acres were low sand or mud banks, or covered with inferior or useless growth.

Erosion operations.

25. Fresh orders were issued, in the sense of the remarks made by the Commissioner in Sind in paragraph 3 of his last review, to ensure against unavoidable loss of timber on banks threatened by erosion. The small amount of Rs. 126 spent for the purpose of keeping "cutting" banks clear of trees and to save them from falling into the river was spent in only one forest of the Sukkur Division, and does not represent the real extent of the erosion operations. In the other divisions as well as in Sukkur, the timber as a rule was sold either standing for a lump sum or on reduced royalty to contractors, who bore the cost of felling and removing. The net value of the wood thus extracted (Rs. 5,380), however, indicates that the measures taken were as vigorous as could be expected under the circumstances.

Survey of the river frontage of forests.

26. In order to keep a correct record of the changes due to the action of the river and to enable the Department to see whether, in the long run, by such changes it is a gainer or a loser, the river frontage of most of the forests was for the first time correctly surveyed and its correct position marked on the maps. This was urgently called for, having in a majority of cases never been attempted with any pretensions to accuracy since the original reservation.

Acquisition of *kachas*.

27. The following statement exhibits the success which attended the efforts of the Department in acquiring new formations thrown up in front of and adjoining Reserved Forests under the Commissioner in Sind's Circular No. 1238, dated 11th April 1889 :—

Division.	No. of undecided claims on 1st July 1896.	No. of new claims.	No. of claims decided.			No. of claims undecided on 30th June 1897.
			In favour of the Department.	Against the Department.	Total.	
Sukkur	1	6	5	...	5	2
Naushahro	3	10	9	...	9	4
Hyderabad	1	2	1	...	1	2
Jerruck	* 1	2	2	...	2	1
Total ...	6	20	17	...	17	9

* This claim is for an accretion to the Keti Mahrani Forest, transferred from the Hyderabad Division.

28. It is very satisfactory to note that all the claims preferred by the Department were settled in its favour. A new claim of the year (Sharifpur in the Larkana Range), rejected by the Collector, has been appealed to, and until the decision of, the Commissioner is known, it has been shown as pending.

II.—Forest Settlements.

Area declared Reserved Forest.

29. The areas finally settled and notified under S. 19 of the Indian Forest Act during the period of this report have been already given under paragraph 20, above.

Areas awaiting final settlement.

30. The settlement of the following areas was awaiting the final orders of Government at the close of the year :—

Division.	Civil District.	Name of Taluka.	Area.	No. and date of Notification under S. 4.
			A. g.	
Jerruck ...	Hyderabad ...	Guni ...	976 28	1967 of 14th March 1895.